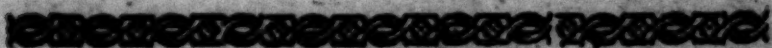


THE
AFRICAN TRADE
FOR
NEGRO SLAVES,

CONSISTENT WITH
HUMANITY AND REVEALED RELIGION.



AMERICAN TRADER

AND

THE

AFRICAN TRADE

FOR

NEGRO SLAVES

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THE
AFRICAN TRADE
FOR
NEGRO SLAVES,
SHEWN TO BE
CONSISTENT WITH PRINCIPLES
OF
HUMANITY,
AND WITH THE LAWS OF
REVEALED RELIGION.

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By THO. THOMPSON, M. A.
SOMETIME FELLOW OF G. C. C.

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MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA.

IN PARTICULAR, TO HIS MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND,

WILLIAM DEVAINES, ESQ;

ONE OF THE COMMITTEE;

THIS TREATISE IS ADDRESSED,

BY THEIR OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THO. THOMPSON.

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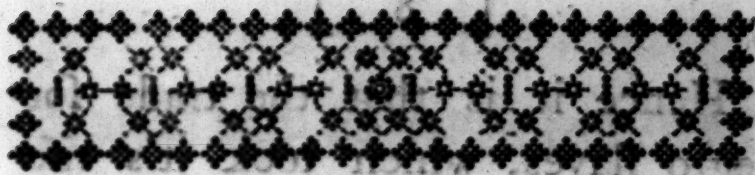
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THE



THE
AFRICAN TRADE
FOR
NEGRO SLAVES
CONSISTENT WITH HUMANITY, &c.

AS the happy free constitution of this kingdom may in some degree account for the bravery of it's people, who are a terror to their enemies in every time of war; so it's excellent religion, as distinguished from the merciless system of the church of *Rome*, has that influence upon the temper, which does honour to the subjects of the *British* crown.

Hence

Hence it is that the trade for negro slaves, which took it's rise from a necessity of supplying our *West India* and *American* colonies with the fittest hands for plantation-work, is generally considered with feelings of tenderness, and but seldom spoken of without great humanity.

Though use inures men to certain businesses, which are never practised, for some time at first, without strong emotions of natural aversion, in the slave trade it is otherwise; and several of our countrymen I have known abroad, who, after a long seasoning to it, have ingenuously owned, they could never well reconcile themselves to it.

It

It must be said there is something very affecting, and disagreeable, in the appearance and notion of human creatures, even the lowest of such, being treated like mere beasts or cattle.

For the negroes so to misuse one another,—this passes in detail without any special remark made upon it. And though more of that be said, by a great deal, than is true; yet, considering them as pagans, and of as dark a mind as complexion, one does not much admire at the monstrous things, which are reported of them. But that christians maintain a commerce with those people for the numberless poor wretches, which they enslave, and drive down

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from

from the country, to the factories and landing-places on the coast, to be sold like bullocks at a fair ;—this is a fact that seems hardly capable of a defence, notwithstanding the impossibility that our plantations can be cultivated without them.

Mr. Sandys, in his travels *, speaks of some charitable Turks, that buy birds out of their cages to let them fly again. But how would the spirit of our benevolent religion shine forth in the nobler purchase of poor negroes, were it to ransom them to their lost liberty, and not to transport them to a slavery more oppressive and rigorous than what

* Lib. 1, page 57.

they

they have suffered in their own country ! Fair as this seems in theory, it would exhaust the treasure of any kingdom to reduce it into practice. We must endeavour then to make the best of what we have : and it may be sufficient, if a lawful trade can be proved, where we cannot shew a boasted virtue.

This subject will grow more serious upon our hands, when we consider the buying and selling negroes, not as a clandestine or piratical business, but as an open, public trade ; encouraged and promoted by acts of parliament. For so, if being contrary to religion, it must be deemed a national sin ; and as such may have a consequence, that

would be always to be dreaded. But as ill a face as it seems to carry, and strong as the objections may be thought to be, which are commonly made against it, it is really as vindicable as any species of trade whatever.

The *Jewish* institution permitted the use of bond-servants. In *Levit.* chap. 25, ver. 39, &c. "If thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant: but as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee. And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto

unto his family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants, which I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bond-men. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God. Both thy bond-men and thy bond-maids which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bond-men and bond-maids. Moreover, of the children of strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land, and they shall be your possession: and ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you to inherit

herit them for a possession: they shall be your bond-men for ever."

The latter part of this statute affords us these three observables ;
 1, An allowance, or permission, granted to the Jews to have and to use slaves for any such work, as they might have occasion to employ them in. 2, That these were to be such as they might buy from the nations which bordered upon their land, or of the heathen, called strangers, that dwelt among them. 3, That the same should be parcel of their goods and chattels, to insure to their heirs, and thus to be a succession of bond-servants to their families for ever. And we further observe, that there is no precept for the

the release of bond-servants, in case of their turning, and becoming proselytes to the law.

From these premises this conclusion may be drawn, that the buying and selling of slaves is not contrary to the law of nature. For the Jewish constitutions were strictly therewith consistent in all points: and these are, in certain cases, the rule by which is determined by learned lawyers and casuists, what is, or is not, contrary to nature.

That there were bond-servants or slaves in christian families, even in the apostolic age, appears clearly from *St. Paul's* 1st epist. to the *Corinth.* chap. 7, ver. 20, &c. "Let every

every man," says he, "abide in the same calling, wherein he was called. Art thou called, being a servant? (~~ΔΕΙΟΝ~~) Care not for it. But if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called of the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men". The sense of the words is this; whoever is called by divine grace to the profession of the gospel, if being a bond-servant, let him content himself to remain in that state, his new and sacred relation by no means releasing him from it. For thou, though being in bond-service, art nevertheless capable of the blessings and

and interests of christianity, which puts no difference betwixt bond and free *. Therefore urge not to have thy freedom, much less insist on, or make a demand of, nor even so much as wish for it; but accept it as a favour, if perchance an offer of it should be made thee.—

The words of the apostle, now cited, afford an argument *a fortiori*, to the lawfulness of purchasing and using heathen slaves, they being evidently addressed to bond-servants, which had been brought into the christian religion. For if those might be lawfully retained in servitude after their conversion, then were they lawfully slaves before.

* Col. iii. 11.

The epistle of *Paul* to *Philemon* gives yet further light into this matter; which is a letter of intercession and request in behalf of one *Onesimus*, a bond-man, who had fled away from his master; whom *Paul* happening to meet with, and having converted, sends him back with this epistle; the purport of which is not to assert this man's freedom, now become a christian; but is only to entreat *Philemon* to pardon his fault; and that taking him again in his former capacity, he would use him kindly.

With respect to the subject now before us, here are three particulars to be considered.

I. What

I. What is the case of slavery, abstracted from circumstances, and as it is simply in itself.

II. What the general nature of trade is. And

III. Whether slaves are proper subjects of trade.

First, Slavery, as it differs from free service, is the subjection of one person to another as a servant for life. *Justinian* defines it, a constitution of the law of nations, by which, contrary to nature (or the natural freedom of mankind) one person is subject to the dominion of

another*. And slaves were called *Servi*, he says, for the reason, that generals of armies did use to sell those whom they took captive, and thus saved them from being put to the sword †.

The word *Slave* some derive from *Sclavus*, the name of a people in *Scythia*. Skinner gives its etymology from the nation or country *Sclava*, *Sclavona* or *Sclavonica*, a vast number of which people formerly were taken captives in war, partly by the *Germans*, partly by the *Ve-*

* *Servitus est constitutio juris gentium, qua quis dominio alieno contra naturam subijcitur. Institus. l. 1, tit. 3.*

† *Servi autem ex eo appellati sunt, quod imperatores, captivos vendere, ac per hoc servare, nec occidere solent. Id. ibid.*

netians, and sold away for servants*.

But it seems rather that the word is a corruption of *Salvus*, from which comes *Salvage*, a term signifying the recompence allowed by the statute and civil law, to such persons as have assisted in saving merchandizes, ships, &c. perishing in wrecks, or by pirates, or enemies†.

Slavery then had its origin from a principle of humanity, and averfeness to shedding blood. Conquerors, rather than slay those whom they took in war, chose to dispose of them in a milder way, and sold them into servitude.

* Skinneri etymol. ling. Angl.

† Chambers's cyclopaedia.

The condition of a slave, and that of a free servant, differ chiefly in these respects ; the latter has a power to chuse whom he will serve, which the other has not. And a free servant has wages ; a slave, none. But the serving without wages, is not serving for nothing ; for there is his keeping, and all necessaries found him.

The state of servitude, simply considered, is nothing shocking, though circumstances too often make it so. The stress of labour that is endured by many, the mean diet, and scantiness of their provisions ; the severity inflicted on them for their faults and offences ; and other hard usage with which they are

are often treated : these miseries arise not from the nature of their case, considered merely as slaves, but from the injustice and cruelty of their owners. The proper work of slaves is nothing above their strength; and every real hardship that is imposed on them is an abuse of power.

By the law of nature, all persons are free. But absolute freedom is incompatible with civil establishments. Every man's liberty is restricted by national laws, and natural privilege does rightly yield to legal constitutions; which are designed and enacted for the public weal.

The

The *Africans* are generally held to be a savage people ; committing all kinds of violence upon one another ; and it is not uncommonly thought, that most of the negroes which are brought from the *Guiney* coast, have been forced into slavery by their stronger neighbours, or betrayed by them into the merchant's hands ; and they are said to sell their wives and children, and steal others where they can pick them up, to make merchandize of them. But though these practices are not without example, yet frequent they are not, and cannot be ; for every negro nation has its form of government ; and by their public customs, which are statutory, the rights and properties of individuals

duals are ascertained, and those outrages in a great measure prevented, which people living in a state of anarchy would commit. The customs of the blacks are many of them good rules of policy, such as would not disgrace a more regular constitution.

The grand source whence the marts are supplied with negroes, at all the trading places of the coast, is war, which is carried on and waged by the contending nations, with as little slaughter as possible, it being the business of the field not to kill, but make captives. Slavery therefore does not accrue, by might overcoming right; but by the fortune of war, and partly from nati-

onal customs of equal authority with laws ; as the selling of criminals, and insolvent debtors.

Secondly, What the general nature of trade is ; this is next to be said ; and that both with reference to the subject or thing dealt for ; and the manner of dealing.

Any thing being made a subject of trade, which to sell is not contrary to godliness, to moral virtue, to humanity, to legal right and justice, nor to the laws in being, is lawful trade ; and what is not consistent with these, is unlawful.

Offences against godliness, in the way of commerce are, when things sacred are prostituted to sale.

Against

Against moral virtue, are all bargains that subserve to vitious purposes of turpitude and naughtiness.

Against humanity, is the selling off any goods whereby distress is caused to persons, which have a family-right to them; as where a man puts off the most necessary of his household goods, or sells the cloaths that would cover his children, or wife, and this only to raise money to serve his own extravagancy.

Against right and justice, is the making sale of another's property without his knowledge or consent.

Against the laws in being, is all that is called illicit trade.

In these several kinds, nothing can qualify the transgression of the parties, so as to render it lawful, where neither side is ignorant of the unfitness of the subject that is negociated; it being evident, that nothing is lawfully sold or bought, which ought not to be sold at all.

Next, of the manner of dealing; what, as to the subject of commerce, is lawful trade, may, in respect to the conduct, not be fair trade. But this is clear, and needs no explaining.

Thirdly, Whether slaves be proper subjects of trade. In denial hereof it is alledged, that the setting to sale human creatures is violating the

the natural distinction of the species, and levelling men with beasts. But to this it may be answered, that every person is treated as a human being, who is treated according to his lawful state and condition. The buying a slave is taking him as what he is; and the sale does but signify, that his owner is willing to part with, and another has a mind to have him. Here then is no violation of humanity; and the property in such individual is transferable, like all other property.

Another argument is, that whatever is sold, all that is natural to, and inseparable from it, is included in the purchase; consequently, the life of a slave is sold and bought.

But

But to this the answer is, that nothing can be deemed as sold, which was not intended to be bought ; and the matter of the purchase is nothing more than the labour and service of the slave.

The seizing and carrying off of negroes from the coast, which is called *panyaring*, is what the masters of ships in the *African* trade are sometimes obliged to, and is done by way of reprisal for theft or damage committed by the natives. If this method were not taken, there could be no trading with them ; every long-boat that goes with goods ashore, would be in danger of being cut off. But the practice is in established use among the natives themselves,

selves, so that they are only dealt with in this according to their own laws.

Our traders have been represented as spiriting up the blacks to war; which if true, and that any means are used to set those nations one against another, in order to make a trading advantage by it, were a thing to be detested. But as the trade is conducted upon true mercantile principles, it is no more chargeable with this consequence, than trade in general is, with the vices and luxury which are fed by the wealth and affluence it produces.

F I N I S.

